UNITED
NATIONS

TD

United Nations Conference
on Trade and Development

Distr.
GENERAL

TD/B/SCP/1
9 February 1993

Original: ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Special Committee on Preferences
Twentieth session
Geneva, 10 May 1993
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Provisional agenda and annotations to the provisional agenda

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

I. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Review of the implementation, maintenance, improvement and utilization of the generalized system of preferences

4. Consultations on harmonization and improvement of the rules of origin

5. Technical assistance in connection with the generalized system of preferences

6. Provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Special Committee on Preferences

7. Other business

8. Adoption of the report of the Special Committee on Preferences to the Trade and Development Board.

GE.93-50350

II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Introduction

By its resolution 77 (III), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development decided to establish the Special Committee on Preferences as a permanent mechanism within UNCTAD. Its terms of reference are described in section VIII of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Special Committee at its fourth session. Accordingly, at its twentieth session the Committee will, inter alia, carry out the periodic review of the generalized system of preferences.

The twentieth session of the Special Committee will be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 10 to 14 May 1993.

Item 1: Election of officers

At its fifth session, the Committee decided to apply the seven-session cycle of rotation (like that annexed to the rules of procedure of the former Committee on Manufactures) and to elect a Chairman and a Rapporteur for that session in accordance with the second year of the cycle. It agreed that the election of the Chairmen and Rapporteurs who had held office during the period before its change of status (i.e. during the first four sessions) would be considered as being in application of the first year of the cycle.[1]

Accordingly, the twentieth session corresponds to the third session of a seven-session cycle, and the Chairman of the twentieth session will be elected from among the representatives of countries members of Group A, while the Rapporteur will be selected from among the representatives of countries members of Group D.

The Committee will complete its Bureau by electing five Vice-Chairmen, in accordance with rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the former main Committees[2] (i.e. two from Group B, one from Group D and three from Groups A and C combined).

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda for the twentieth session of the Special Committee on Preferences was approved by the Special Committee on Preferences at its 176th plenary meeting on 22 May 1992.

In its decision 179 (XVIII) of 17 September 1978, the Board stipulated that the annual sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences should be conducted according to the following procedure:

"1. The plenary meetings of the Special Committee on Preferences should be devoted primarily to issues of a general character concerning the generalized system of preferences;

"2. During the sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences, informal plurilateral consultations should be held on individual schemes, if so requested, between preference-receiving countries, on the one hand, and the preference-giving country concerned, on the other. These plurilateral consultations would be private and confidential in character."

In his note of February 1993, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD invited States members which were interested in holding plurilateral consultations to advise the secretariat well in advance of the twentieth session of the Special Committee so that the necessary arrangements could be made for holding such consultations. The secretariat will in due course inform States members concerned of requests received and of consequent arrangements for consultations.

As noted in the annotation to item 4, that item is to be considered in a sessional committee. It is suggested that, in accordance with usual practice, the sessional committee elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

Item 3: Review of the implementation, maintenance, improvement and utilization of the generalized system of preferences

The Special Committee will have before it the "Sixteenth general report on the implementation of the generalized system of preferences" (TD/B/SCP/3). Chapter I highlights the changes and improvements that have taken place in the various schemes since the nineteenth session of the Special Committee on Preferences. Chapter II updates the trade effects of the system to cover the most recent period for which information is available. Also relevant to this agenda item are the replies received from preference-giving countries on the operation and effects of the various schemes (TD/B/C.5/PREF/49 to 55) as well as notes by the UNCTAD secretariat providing the latest information on the operation and effects of the EEC scheme 1992 (TD/B/C.5/EEC/17) and the scheme of Japan 1991 (TD/B/C.5/JAPAN/16).

Item 4: Consultations on harmonization and improvement of the rules of origin

In its resolution 352 (XXXIV), the Trade and Development Board endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the In-Depth Study of the United Nations Intergovernmental Structure and Functions in the Economic and Social Fields, and the Working Group on Rules of Origin was converted into a sessional committee of the Special Committee on Preferences.[3] If it is deemed necessary, the Committee could convene a sessional committee to address issues related to the rules of origin.

Item 5: Technical assistance in connection with the generalized system of preferences

The Special Committee will have before it a report on "Technical cooperation activities on the generalized system of preferences and other trade laws, 1992" (TD/B/SCP/2). The report underscores the importance of these activities and addresses the financial viability of the Geneva-based programme of technical cooperation on the GSP.

Item 6: Provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Special Committee on Preferences

In accordance with rule 8 of the rules of procedures of the former main Committees (by which the Special Committee is guided), during the session the secretariat will submit a draft provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Committee.

Item 8: Adoption of the report of the Special Committee on Preferences to the Trade and Development Board

The Board, at its executive session prior to the first part of its fortieth session, will consider the report of the Special Committee.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to paragraph 6 of decision 302 (XXIX) adopted by the Board on 21 September 1984, whereby the Board instructed its main Committees and other subsidiary bodies to ensure that their reports were concise, action-oriented and not exceeding the limit of 32 pages. The Special Committee may wish to invite the Rapporteur, in cooperation with delegations and the secretariat, to make every possible effort to conform to this decision of the Board.

Notes

1. Official Records of the Trade and Development Board, thirteenth session, Supplement No. 3 (TD/B/442), paras. 230-232.

2. At its fifth session the Committee decided to continue being guided, as appropriate, by the rules of procedure of the Committee on Manufactures (ibid., para. 230), which have since been incorporated into a consolidated set of rules of procedure of the main Committees of the Board (TD/B/740).

3. TD/B/1154.